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# Garryowen Neighbourhood Report

Findings from the 3-Cities Project

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# Garryowen Neighbourhood Report

## Introduction

This report documents research on the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Garryowen, in Limerick city. The research focuses on different experiences and transitions in people's lives, described as their life course, and on holistic forms of participation. Garryowen, an established suburban residential neighbourhood, is one of six urban sites featured in the 3-Cities Project (see Box 1). Undertaken in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders, the Project represents the first time that this topic has been investigated from the shared perspectives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Findings presented here offer insight into: shared experiences of individuals from across these groups; the ways in which they take part in the locality and; how Garryowen, as a placed-based community of people and as a service site, facilitates or impedes participation. In Garryowen, two central research questions, developed in conjunction with community stakeholders and local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, guided the research process. These questions were:

1. How do children and youth, older people and people with disabilities experience pride in the Garryowen neighbourhood?
2. To what extent is a sense of marginalisation experienced by children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Garryowen?

### Box 1: The 3-Cities Project

The 3-Cities Project aims to engage in a collaborative process to re-imagine services and communities to maximise participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in their localities and cities.

Focusing on Dublin, Limerick and Galway the 3-Cities Project has five main objectives:

1. Capture the diverse life-course perspectives of these three groups, and integrate their voices into policy and practice innovation;
2. Explore the role of community and city contexts in shaping the participatory experiences of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
3. Critically review existing service infrastructure for supporting participation amongst these three groups in city life;
4. Underpinned by a commitment to citizen engagement, develop a shared understanding of the assets and opportunities of community living across the life course, with these groups, and local and regional stakeholders;
5. Inform the development of integrative models for participation that support and enable these three groups in their neighbourhoods and cities.

### Key messages arising from this research include:

1. The potential role of the neighbourhood to enable participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
2. The strength of participants' relationships with Garryowen is evident across the life course;
3. There is significant individual-and neighbourhood-level resilience in Garryowen;
4. Local service infrastructure influences participation for the three participant groups;
5. Multifaceted forms of marginalisation impacts on children and youth, older people and people with disabilities living in Garryowen;
6. The community of Garryowen continues to matter for participants.

### Why focus on the neighbourhood level

The research presented here is informed by the first phase of the 3-Cities Project. This work focused on the city-wide level and explored participation in Dublin, Limerick and Galway from the perspectives of service managers, service providers, and children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. The findings from this work (available from: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/the-threecitiesproject/outputs/>) pointed to the need to understand participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities, not only in the context of the local urban neighbourhoods that they reside in, but also in the context of their diverse and individual life experiences.

The importance of neighbourhood emerged as a key message. It was reflected in how service stakeholders described the complexities of service provision to enhance participation. It also featured in local residents' understandings of participation and in their perceptions of barriers to greater engagement. Additionally, the findings suggested that greater consideration should be given to the diversity of neighbourhoods (in social, economic, cultural and demographic terms) within each city. Participation, and service need/provision to enhance participation, was seen to vary from one neighbourhood to the next. It is also important to recognise that these neighbourhoods do

not exist in isolation; they are interconnected in various ways with surrounding neighbourhoods and the broader city. It is only by exploring in depth the different kinds of urban neighbourhoods across the three cities that we can hope to understand the role of the city in shaping the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Addressing themes within existing scientific literature on urbanisation, ageing, youth and disability, and to reflect differing social, economic, demographic and residential perspectives, two neighbourhoods in each city were chosen for the research. Each neighbourhood site fulfils one or more of the following criteria:

1. Represents neighbourhoods of different socio-economic status;
2. Represents new urban/suburban developments;
3. Represents new residential communities: e.g. ethnic minority and migrant communities;
4. Represents significant population and neighbourhood change;
5. Represents an inner-city location.

The first phase of work also illustrated the need to consider community participation as a holistic idea. Informants spoke about participation as involving elements of choice, control, independence and meaningful engagement across multiple areas of life (e.g. personal development; social relations; economic roles; cultural activities; civic participation).







Figure 1 Map of Garryowen.

Source: OpenStreetMap Basemap.

## Why did we choose Garryowen?

Garryowen was selected as one of the 3-Cities Project neighbourhood sites as it met a number of our key criteria, including: being an established neighbourhood close to the city centre that has a lower neighbourhood-level socioeconomic status. Garryowen was also selected because it was not one of the neighbourhoods in the Limerick Regeneration Plan and yet was considered to have significant pockets of deprivation. Garryowen is a residential neighbourhood, located on the southern outskirts of Limerick city. With reference to Figure 1, the area under consideration in this document is defined by New Road and Pennywell Road on the west side of the neighbourhood. Dublin Road on the north end as far as Patrick's Road. Garryowen Road marks the southern boundary of the neighbourhood, with both sides of

Garryowen Road considered to be included as a part of the neighbourhood.

The Garryowen neighbourhood is comprised of urban housing with few apartments and a population of just over 3,300 people (CSO, 2011).<sup>1</sup> Anecdotally, many Garryowen residents belong to second and third generation families from the area, with little or no population change in many of Garryowen's sub-districts. The neighbourhood is for the most part an ethnically white Irish area. There are high concentrations of younger people (approximately 9% of people are aged between 12-18 years) and older people (approximately 17% of people are aged 65 years and over), though distributed in different areas in the community, with older adult residents concentrated towards the city centre. There is also a significant proportion (approximately 10%) of adults reporting having a disability in the area (CSO, 2011).<sup>2</sup> The historical economic roots of Garryowen centre on local industries such as basket-making, lace production

1 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: usually resident by population by place of birth and nationality. Dublin: Central Statistics Office

2 CSO (2011) Census Small Area Population Statistics: population aged 0-19 by sex and year of age, person aged 20+ by sex and age group. Dublin: Central Statistics Office

## Project Lifecourse

and breweries. The history and culture of these industries remain a source of pride in the area. However, since these industries are no longer in the area, residents largely leave the neighbourhood to seek employment in occupations such as manufacturing and retail jobs.

St. John's Cathedral in Garryowen is a city landmark, and a source of local pride. The name Garryowen has had a historically positive reputation and association for locals. Garryowen has large green areas that are used locally. The area has seen the recent refurbishment of the Markets Field as a local venue for sporting activities, and has Limerick F.C. as an anchor tenant. Geraldine's F.C. based in the neighbourhood is a local soccer club with a substantial tradition in the area and city. The neighbourhood has a number of retail shops, primary schools, a post office and a pub. The local Community Development Project is located in a renovated house on Garryowen Road, which serves as a temporary community centre. The Good Shepherd Sisters Day Care Centre is located on Pennywell Road, providing day care service for older adults. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Limerick Day Care Centre is located in Kilmurry Court, and provides specialised day services.



In recent years, the area has seen large demographic changes. The historically high level of home ownership has begun to change recently, with an increase of social housing units in the area as residents pass on or move out of the area. Anecdotally, a relatively high number of Regeneration-site residents have been relocated to Garryowen as a part of the Regeneration process. The 2011 Deprivation Index classifies Garryowen as 'Very Disadvantaged' towards the city centre, 'Disadvantaged' in the south end of the community and 'Marginally Below Average' in the northern end of Garryowen. Garryowen is not a part of the RAPID programme (as part of the Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development programme).

## What we did?

It is helpful to first situate this report within the wider methodology of the 3-Cities Project. The Project adopted an explorative and participatory qualitative approach. Each phase of work, and each strand of research within these phases, sought to inform subsequent research activities. This helped to refine the research questions as the project progressed. This innovative approach also focused on developing a collaborative participatory process with all participants, with a view to equalising power differentials between different groups.

City-wide data collection in the three cities took place between January and October 2014 and involved: interviews with 20 public-service managers (e.g. health and social care service managers; local authority representatives and managers); nine focus groups with 78 public, private, and voluntary and community service providers (in the areas of health and social care; social inclusion; housing; transport and mobility; and education, training and employment); and 12 focus groups with children and youth (12-18 years), older people (65 years and over), people with intellectual disabilities, and people with physical and sensory disabilities (one discussion per group) from across each city.

Neighbourhood-level data collection focused on two neighbourhoods in each city, and took place between April 2015 and January 2016. Neighbourhoods included Garryowen and South Circular Road in Limerick, Doughiska (as a part of the broader ARD region) and Claddagh in Galway, and East Wall and the Liberties in Dublin. These neighbourhoods were identified through a consultative process in each city with a Service Provider Advisory Forum (involving a sample of providers from

the first phase), and a target group Advisory Forum (involving a sample of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities from the first phase). In Garryowen, and in each of the other neighbourhoods, a series of linked research activities were conducted with children and youth, older people, people with disabilities and community stakeholders. While these activities were limited in the number of participants that could be included in each strand, the focus was on securing a representative sample of each group across gender, ethnicity, and residential tenure.

Generally reflective of the experience in all six neighbourhood sites, and despite a range of recruitment strategies (e.g. stakeholders acting as gatekeepers; snowball sampling; contact through related community and support groups), people with disabilities are not represented in the study samples to the same extent as the other two groups. This is acknowledged as a limitation of the research.

The neighbourhood-level research included:

### **Local Focus Groups:**

Two local focus groups were organised in each neighbourhood to gather insight into challenges and opportunities with respect to the participation of the three participant groups in each neighbourhood. A resident focus group was conducted with a purposive sample of children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in each site. In Garryowen, this discussion involved four children and youth, two older people and two people with disabilities (n=7). A community stakeholder focus group was conducted with key leaders and local champions, service providers from youth, ageing and disability sectors, and representatives from community development organisations, and national organisations with local remits. In Garryowen, five people took part in this discussion. Adapted versions of Participatory Learning Action (PLA) techniques were used to structure how participants took part in the discussion, helping to ensure equal contributions.

### **Collaborative Forum 1:**

This Forum drew together community stakeholders and residents from the local focus groups. The purpose of the Collaborative Forum was to agree and prioritise issues with respect to the three groups and to establish the central questions (as presented in the Introduction of this report) that needed to be researched in their neighbourhood. In Garryowen, 14 community stakeholders, children and youth, older people and people with disabilities participated in the Collaborative Forum.

### **Life-Course Narrative Interviews:**

These interviews were used to explore personal experiences of participation and living in the neighbourhood from the perspective of the three groups. Using a variation of the Biographical Interpretative Narrative Method, the interviews provided an opportunity for participants to tell their own story of engagement with the local neighbourhood. In addition, through the use of semi-structured questions, the interviews allowed the research team to probe on topics related to the central research questions identified in the Collaborative Forum. In Garryowen, three children and youth, six older people and two people with intellectual disabilities participated in these interviews (n=11).

### **Go-Along Interviews:**

Go-Along Interviews were used to capture insight into how individuals from the three groups accessed and used services and amenities, or participated in activities, in their local urban environment. These interviews involved the participant bringing the researcher to venues of significance for their participation in the neighbourhood. This approach allowed participants greater control over the interview process, while permitting the research team to contextualise individual experiences of participation. In Garryowen, one person from each of the three groups took part in the Go-Along interviews (n=3).

### **Citizen Researcher Training Programme:**

Children and youth, older people and people with disabilities from each neighbourhood were trained as researchers. The Programme involved the co-development of a project to be conducted by participants within their neighbourhood to address the questions identified in the Collaborative Forum. Harnessing research techniques such as photo elicitation and focus group facilitation, this process helped to ensure the relevance and validity of the 3-Cities Project to people's lives and to support residents to communicate their priorities. In Garryowen, two children and youth and one older person took part in this training (n=3).

### **Collaborative Forum 2:**

The findings emerging from these research strands were then presented back to the Collaborative Forums in each site and used as a basis to agree key recommendations for enhancing participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in the neighbourhood. In Garryowen, six community stakeholders, children and youth, older people and people with disabilities participated in the second Collaborative Forum.



For the purposes of this report, we draw primarily on the findings from the life-course narrative and go-along interviews.

### What we found

Four interconnected themes emerged from the data collection in Garryowen on community participation and the three groups: neighbourhood belonging; local services; feeling left behind and; social cohesion and safety. These themes reflected community-level issues, rather than the individual needs and preferences of each of the three groups. The four themes were also closely tied to the particular social, economic and cultural context of Garryowen as a Limerick city neighbourhood.



### Neighbourhood Belonging

Neighbourhood belonging was fundamentally connected to how people participate and what motivates them to participate in Garryowen. From interview accounts, it was apparent that a strong sense of belonging could, in some cases, help to encourage members of the three groups to participate, while weak feelings of belonging could mean people were less likely to take part. The findings of the interviews also demonstrated that this relationship between belonging and participation was sometimes reversed, with feelings of belonging sometimes dependent on the different opportunities for participation available in the local neighbourhood. There were two identifiable mechanisms that fostered a sense of belonging to Garryowen, which also had an influence on how, and to what degree, members of the three groups participated in the community:

#### Pride in the community

Pride in the Garryowen community was a key expression of belonging in this research and closely connected with local identity. There was a consensus among participants that Garryowen was a community where residents felt proud to live. This reflected the fact that Garryowen is an old and established part of Limerick, with many third-generation residents living in the area. As a result, pride was particularly highlighted by long-term residents of the neighbourhood. It was in this context that some participants lamented Garryowen's struggle to show outwardly the sense of history and identity it has had for so long in the city, county and country. In this excerpt, the local pride older people have in the neighbourhood is illustrated by this older man:

Well I think we pride ourselves, you know, I think when you mention Garryowen like, you know, it's famous in song and story, you know, and Garryowen, what springs to mind oh Garryowen is old, you know, but it's still, Garryowen is possibly better known than Limerick itself. (Male, Older Adult Group, KE LC1).

In our interviews, older people drew on memories from across the course of their lives, stretching back decades, recounting key examples of the source of their pride in the community. This included memories of Garryowen at a time when they considered it a more closely-connected community of people in a geographically smaller, less urban area. Older participants spoke especially about local forms of activism and solidarity. There was a particular



emphasis on how members of the local community were able to organise effectively to buy their own houses, at a time in the past when this was less common. The historical achievement of a high level of home ownership in the community that is only recently lessening was a recurring example of community pride. This was evident in how younger generations spoke about Garryowen and is illustrated by this participant living with a disability:

[Garryowen] used to be and still is in my opinion one of the better parts of Limerick. Always very neighbourly. People own their own houses, everybody in Garryowen bought their houses, they own them and they care for them...I love it, I love where I live and I consider myself lucky to be in this area, this part of Garryowen. (Female, People with Disabilities Group, KE GA1).

Other memories focused on instances when the community was willing to act to better public areas in the neighbourhood and when they came together to create particular cultural and religious landmarks that have become important symbols of local pride. The construction of the Marian shrine in the centre of Garryowen was a clear example of this:

The statue was erected and we had loads of painters and all ... [the organiser had] no talk of giving them money only 'Will you do this?' and 'Will you do that?' They couldn't say no. The statue is erected and it is respected, you know... we got money kind of rolling in because Garryowen was a holy place at that time like and people didn't mind giving a few bob. Even though they might be short themselves... (Male, Older Adult Group, CF LC6).

Many of the participants in this research cited the shrine as a special place for them. In contrast to other local areas which were said to be subject to antisocial behaviour, the shrine was described as being respected by all and therefore remained as a sense of pride in today's Garryowen. As this older person points out, people remain proud of the shrine:

I see them out there and they're all cleaning the Garryowen shrine, picking up the weeds and picking up the papers and keeping the shrine beautiful and clean... I often go down now with a neighbour or two and we help out and they give us a bag and a thing for picking up the old papers and keep the area clean... (Female, Older Adult Group, CF LC2).

Drawing on the wider research process, and in particular the activities of the Citizen Research Training, children and youth participants also took pride from the past endeavours of the neighbourhood. However, this form of pride was again linked to the life-histories of older participants and to their descriptions of certain achievements and local practices (such as the Limerick city St. Patrick's Day parade ending in Garryowen).

There were a number of other sources of neighbourhood pride identified by Garryowen residents. St. John's Cathedral was highlighted by participants with disabilities and by older people, while Geraldine's F.C. and the Garryowen Community Development Project, notably the Youth Development Project were highlighted as important aspects of the neighbourhood by children and youth residents.

### Events and services as sources of belonging

There were a number of events, services and local amenities (e.g. social centre) and clubs that were noted by participants as helping to strengthen their feelings of belonging to Garryowen and, at the same time, providing important channels of participation. Just as pride in the community was a particularly strong means of fostering feelings of belonging amongst older residents, these mechanisms of belonging were particularly strong for children and youth participants. The annual fair that takes place in Garryowen's main green was discussed as an important example of the community's enduring capacity to mix together and an opportunity to celebrate the community as a distinctive place to live. This is illustrated in the following quote, which points to the importance of collective communal interaction in the neighbourhood to some residents:

I think one day that the whole community looks forward to is the Garryowen community fair... There's always the Geraldine's junior 18s playing against the Gardaí in an 11-a-side game. It's kind of like a community games, kind of thing... It's good to see the whole community down there, just having a good time. (Male, Younger Participant, KE LC4).

Younger participants outlined how they rely heavily on local clubs to provide ways to take part in the community. Local sports clubs can often be an important hub for belonging, and Geraldine's soccer club in Garryowen was identified as an outlet for younger people to represent the community and feel more a part of Garryowen:

## Project Lifecourse

Every boy from Garryowen plays for them. And that brings a sense of community in as well because there's a lot of community spirit. (Female, Younger Participant CF LC10).

These clubs were especially mentioned in light of helping children and youth residents, who identified a lack of activities/ facilities in the area for their age group. Geraldine's soccer club was again highlighted in this regard and, as noted by this younger person, was a welcome alternative to other more anti-social activities that might occur in the neighbourhood:

All my friends play for the club and I think the club is vital in Garryowen, because there are not a lot of facilities around here. Once a week, twice a week, that's when I can get away and just focus on football and not anything else, like, when you walk around, any anti-social behaviour or anything like that. (Male, Younger Participant, KE LC4).

These clubs were recognised by some participants as having a wider impact on the local neighbourhood, outside that of their intended target groups. Events and activities that draw the community together and make people feel more connected to the neighbourhood were especially praised and highlighted. This was in light of some participants describing differences in the ways in which some groups of residents participated in the neighbourhood:

I mean the whole of Garryowen will go down and watch [Geraldine's F.C.] play a match and everything. And then you've the community centre as well. So I think that's, it brings people together, so that makes you feel part of a group or community, so it makes you feel proud. And I just feel proud anyway because I love, I do love living here, I really do... (Female, Younger Participant, CF LC10).

## Services

Services, and their relevance, to the lives of local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities were discussed by many of the participants in this research. Building on some of the findings in the previous section, although aspects of the local neighbourhood-based service infrastructure were praised, there were clear concerns expressed about the ways in which existing limitations could impact on participation. Ultimately, there were

significant service gaps with respect to specific health and social care needs of the three participant groups and, more generally, there was an absence of services that facilitated supported channels of engagement.

In some cases, the service-gap was most evident as people move or transition into new stages and experiences in their lives. This was highlighted by an older teenage girl who talked about receiving support from services within the community, but how such services were no longer always able to cater for their needs. For a number of children and youth participants, this meant leaving Garryowen to use services and amenities in the inner city or in other neighbourhoods. For other participants, this meant having to become co-organisers and volunteers themselves within neighbourhood based services. As highlighted by this younger female resident, while such roles can bring new and positive ways of contributing back to the neighbourhood, they mask the absence of opportunities for participation for this group:

We're getting older now. The group that I'm in, it's the oldest group that's there, we're all, there's only five of us. There's me, I'm eighteen, my friend is nineteen, my other friend is nineteen, and then there's a seventeen year old and another seventeen year old. And like, [the local project worker] is trying her best to think of things... [but] we've done everything, we've run out of things to do. So we more volunteer now than actually do things with her... And that's what I think she appreciates more than anything is that we're, she gave so much to us, we're giving a bit back to her now by helping her out. (Female, Younger Participant, CF LC10).

For older residents of Garryowen, and aside from the Pennywell Day Centre and groups organised by the Garryowen Community Development Project, many services that cater for their needs are located outside the community. Reflecting a broader concern expressed in the wider research process by community stakeholders and members of the three participant groups, the absence of a dedicated community centre in Garryowen was seen as a significant impediment to participation for the three groups. While services that were located in other neighbourhoods could provide an important means of engagement outside of Garryowen for individuals, all three groups voiced concerns about the general decline and absence of structures that helped keep them socially connected to their locality.

Concerns about services for people with disabilities were raised by participants living with a disability themselves and by other participants and community stakeholders. People highlighted the lack of services and the lack of supported engagement in Garryowen. As this woman describes, there are few services locally that are relevant to her needs and, in this context, highlights the importance of Mass not just as a religious outlet, but as a setting for regular informal contact:

I think Mass is about the main thing in Garryowen, other than that there are no facilities here, if there are, I don't know of them...We don't be rushing [to Mass], I link [her friend] and we chat and stop and we go and we take our time, we enjoy it and if we meet anyone along the way better still, we stand and we chat... There's nothing for me. There is a club there, a ladies club but that closes down in the summer, that doesn't open until September. Now that wouldn't be any good to me because I can't see, I'm half blind... it's no good because they do art classes and I can't see but that closes the whole summer, it only opens in the winter. (Female, Older Adult Group KE GA1).

This lack of community-based support was viewed as a source of significant frustration for individuals living with a disability and their families. As this children and youth participant describes in relation to her younger sister, the absence of infrastructure locally means that people with disabilities do not get the opportunity to participate in their own neighbourhoods, and instead have to look to services and communities further away as sources and centres of participation:

My sister, she's fifteen and she's disabled, and there is not one thing around for her to do. There's not one thing. She's stuck in from the morning until the night ... she's no one to play with and if she does go out to play with someone, my mother has to go all the way out to Patrickswell for her to go out and play with someone... And it's just drives me mad, because like even if they set up a group or something, you know. Because there is a lot of disabled children around here, because I know some of them. (Female, Younger Participant CF LC10).

The reliance on opportunities for participation located outside of the immediate neighbourhood was a widespread phenomenon for people with disabilities. This was not just the case in Garryowen, but also in a number

of the other neighbourhood sites in the 3-Cities Project. It contributed to a form of invisibility of people with disabilities within some of these neighbourhoods, and served as a significant barrier to fostering feelings of belonging and connectedness for individuals. Participants with disabilities in Garryowen were independent, choosing to stay among people they know. These participants spoke about how they were happy to be a part of the community and would remain there, despite there being a dearth of services to support them. Nevertheless, it was clear these participants struggle to be meaningfully engaged in the neighbourhood, and depend heavily on external services to facilitate participation. Even in this case, however, participation was not without its challenges, with this person having to carefully choose whether to pay for travel to health appointments or travel to social clubs:

Only for the clubs I am in I would be stuck in all the time, I wouldn't be able to go anywhere. ... it is frustrating when I can't go out to the clubs or anything you know when I'm stuck at home I'd be thinking of all my friends in the club and I can't go, do you know. I mean there now tonight I will be thinking about all them in the club tonight knowing that I can't go but there is nothing I can do, you know. (Male, Person with a Disability Group, KE LC2).

### Feeling left behind

From interviews with participants, and the wider research process involving community stakeholders, it was apparent that there was a clear sense Garryowen, and its residents, were being left behind. Reflecting different structural forms of disadvantage, this was evident as a broader backdrop in how children and youth, older people and people with disabilities spoke about participation and their neighbourhood. It also appeared to impact on the participation of the three participant groups on social, cultural and civic levels.

Political representation and prioritisation was a fundamental issue raised by a number of individuals in this research. Older participants remember how they could at one point seek an audience with a Minister of State when needed, but now politicians seem largely absent from the day to day issues in Garryowen, presenting themselves most often at election time. However, participants talked about being politically overlooked as a long-standing challenge for the neighbourhood and a reflection perhaps of external perceptions that the community is able to cope.



## Project Lifecourse

This is highlighted in the following quote by one older man:

Maybe it's kind of an old integral part of the city like that they just kind of overlook it. I believe someone in authority has said 'Ok, Garryowen doesn't want anything, like, the people in Garryowen are well off, they own their own houses.' You know, which was some comment made by one of the local authorities. (Male, Older Adult Group, KE LC1).

Participants also felt that this political disregard was apparent in more recent initiatives in the city such as Limerick Regeneration and the RAPID programme, where Garryowen was neither categorised as a Regeneration neighbourhood or designated a RAPID area. People spoke about how as a result the neighbourhood lacks facilities available in other neighbourhoods, such as a dedicated community centre or transport facilities. The local Community Development Project, currently serves as a temporary community centre. While this facility is the sole provider of many social services in the neighbourhood, and heavily utilised, participants highlighted that the existing centre was under-resourced and inadequate in design. Additionally, at the time of writing, the Community Development Project were required to find new premises to house the Project. Participants contrasted these circumstances with other newly-built centres in South Hill, St. Munchin's or Moyross. This young girl draws out the sense of relative deprivation in terms of services and facilities available in other areas, compared to Garryowen:

Our community, obviously you've seen our community centre is a house, it's a house. We went up to South Hill and done a hairdressing course for ten weeks. There was just so many floors and so much to do. They have a hall, they've everything. We've a house. I think if we made a bigger community centre there'd be more to do, more classes to do, you know what I mean? (Female, Younger Participant CF LC10).

In the experience of participants, Garryowen is just not visible enough relative to the more traditionally deprived and prioritised communities in Limerick. Thus, a number of residents conclude that the funding and service infrastructures that are improving other Limerick areas are not available to assist Garryowen to become a more engaging neighbourhood. This is illustrated by one older

woman who again focuses on the absence of a suitable community centre and contrasts her own experiences with that of older people in other Limerick neighbourhoods:

People my age group that have done wonders for this country, I think we do deserve a little bit of help when we get like this and we shouldn't be ashamed to ask and I'm not going to be ashamed to ask. We need a community centre in this area, where people like me can socialise and have a bit of help. Other areas in the city have all that sort of thing, they can ring for their dinner, my sister can – they can even have the chiropodist come to the house; that is unheard of up here. I told you it's going to cost me, which I can't afford, €45 just to have my nails cut and they tell me they can get it done for €10 [in the other neighbourhoods]. (Female, Older Adult Group KE GA1).

In addition to feelings of being politically overlooked and a sense of relative deprivation, participants in Garryowen did feel that the neighbourhood was tainted by association with other areas in Limerick. Some participants from the three groups discussed perceptions relating to the negative media focus on Limerick neighbourhoods. National media were thought to highlight Limerick as a city that is difficult to live in, without distinguishing between the different communities. Participants felt that when Garryowen was represented, the neighbourhood was portrayed as socially disadvantaged and as 'troubled' as some other areas in Limerick, giving a skewed impression of locality:

Well the way it's been like going, what people are saying in the newspaper about it, it's like the worst place in the world. Like, but you have to be here and live here to experience the good parts about it. They don't, they never talk about the good parts of Garryowen. (Female, Younger Participant CF LC10).

Garryowen participants were cognisant of how the community has been positioned on the margins in terms of its reputation. Outside of national media representation, respondents were acutely aware of the negative perceptions of Garryowen in many people's eyes. They suggest that this reputation is derived, not necessarily from the people who have lived in the area for a long time and who have put down roots in the area, but to a range of other sources. However, locals do not deny that the area has social problems:

If you walk around, it's not that pretty. There's horses; there's lads going around on horses in fields; there's spray paints over the walls, but, I am proud to say I am from Garryowen. (Male, Younger Participant, KE LC4).

Therefore, according to participants, Garryowen appears to be subject to a double disadvantage, with the neighbourhood not receiving access to remedial area-based strategies or funding for deprived areas, and yet endures significant stigmatisation as a disadvantaged and troubled area.

### Neighbourhood cohesion and safety

Linked to findings around 'neighbourhood belonging' and 'feeling left behind', neighbourhood cohesion and safety emerged as a strong theme in interviews with children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. This theme reflected subtle shifts occurring in the community around feelings of togetherness and neighbourliness and more abrasive changes in behaviour that impacted on a sense of personal safety. Both patterns meant alterations to the relational community of Garryowen for participants, which could shape how they participated in the neighbourhood.

In a very fundamental way, informal networks have, in the experience of some participants, diminished, leaving the community feeling less cohesive. While the support between neighbours emerged as a significant and positive local asset, all of the participant groups noted that opportunities for daily meetings and greetings had lessened. As highlighted by this older woman, this was most apparent for older participants:

I remember one time my mother had to call around the back to her neighbour, there was no sugar in the house, to get a half cup of sugar off the lady and she'd give it back at the end of the week. You tell people that now and they wouldn't believe it, they were great neighbours at that time, but you've no neighbours now. (Female, Older Adult Group, CF LC2).

Even though many people discussed the friendliness of the neighbourhood in general, the population has grown, with new people having moved into the area. From participants' accounts, the bonds of community have begun to feel more stretched due to this expansion. With fewer everyday connections to other neighbours, participants

described how maintaining connections to the locality has become a little more difficult. The neighbourhood has become a home for people who have been relocated from Regeneration neighbourhoods and there is a perception from people that both sides are cautious about building ties:

I think at the moment when people move in they are very reluctant like to make neighbours, you know, I think it's kind of a fear factor, you know, I think it's fear factor. (Male, Older Adult Group KE LC1).

Other participants were more direct in their concerns about the impact of the Regeneration resident re-locations:

It's [Regeneration] after ruining the area, that's all I can say, it's after ruining the area. Because you're afraid to leave the house at all now, with the Regeneration crowd. Some, you can get some nice people, but more they just kind of run the street, you know. There's only, when I go out now, I'd only salute whoever passing as such, but I wouldn't be going in and out one another's houses. (Female, Older Adult Group, CF LC11).

A number of participants noted that a by-product of this population in-flow has been that it has changed the proportion of owner-occupied houses in the area. As previously stated, this was a significant source of pride for Garryowen and this change is to the dismay of some locals:

We got new neighbours there two or three weeks ago and they're from like [a Regeneration neighbourhood], but they're really dirty... I know that there's a family up there, they moved in there from Moyross I think. And then there's a load of houses going up for sale, [people are] getting moved in by the council. So there is a lot of, there's settled Travellers moved in... as well. I don't think it's [Garryowen has] changed. But I know older people are like, we don't want more trouble coming in. (Female, Children and Youth Group CF LC10).

More explicit concerns about personal safety were evident in the interviews of many of the participants. Younger people tend to be more stoical, opting to avoid trouble spots and staying away from people they consider dangerous. Such strategies involve reading the neighbourhood pathways and making choices about where and when to walk, depending on perceived threats of anti-social behaviour. This is captured in the following quote from a younger person:

## Project Lifecourse

The trouble, it's just all the trouble. It's unsafe sometimes. That's what I think it is more than anything, it's unsafe for people to be going round the roads. Like my nana, she lives up the top of the road; she does be terrified walking up the road, terrified... I think the older you get, the more you're worried about it. Like my age group, it's nothing, you're used to it. You're just, because we've grown up with it all our life. (Female, Children and Youth Group CF LC10).

Garryowen residents feel that the neighbourhood has acquired a particular reputation for being unsafe, a reputation they feel the neighbourhood does not particularly deserve, despite some negative occurrences in the locality. However, participants were aware of how anti-social behaviour limits their ability to move freely in the community:

The community has changed, different people have come in. The Regeneration has moved people in. Before, say, we had people rearing greyhounds and things like that. Now they want to rear horses there, which is a big problem, especially where the football pitch is concerned. It's not walled off or anything and now people just let the horses down there and destroy the place, which is a problem. We spoke to the local council on that subject and they're supposed to get the

place walled-off or railed off... I know now and again you have people at night time, kids at night time beer-drinking, but they're not all from the area. There's nothing you can do if they come down. (Male, Older Adult Group CF LC5).

Older people noted how people with few connections to the area have moved into social housing, with a number of them behaving, it seems, in an anti-social manner. Added to this, it was described how some young people from the area and the city congregate to drink together in some of the alleys, making some routes feel impassable for Garryowen residents. Despite these various occurrences, participants were clear about their relationship with their local neighbourhood and how such instances would not detract from their desire to remain living in the community. Even when this woman, who is in a wheelchair, was mugged, she was adamant that it would not push her away from Garryowen:

I was mugged once on the road, on Garryowen Road, I started to feel a bit uneasy after that but then who's to say that these lads were from the Garryowen area, they mightn't have been, they could have been from anywhere but I'm ok now, besides that one unfortunate incidence, Garryowen is a great place to live. (Female, Person with a Disability Group, KE GA2).





### Concluding Points

In focusing on Garryowen, the 3-Cities Project sought to investigate experiences of community participation for the three participant groups in an established neighbourhood close to the city centre, that has a lower neighbourhood-level socioeconomic status and that is not included as one of the neighbourhoods in the Limerick Regeneration Plan. With many third-generation residents in the neighbourhood, and with a strong representation of each of the participant groups, Garryowen provided a rich context for exploring participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. It also provided an interesting lens through which to examine the indirect impact of the Limerick Regeneration process on local neighbourhoods, and children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, outside of the formal plan.

This research did not set out to capture the views of all children and youth, older people and people with disabilities resident in Garryowen. Nor does the research

offer a comprehensive needs-based analysis of these groups. The value of this research is that it offers in-depth insight into the lives of some of Garryowen's residents who are younger, older, or living with a disability. In doing so, it explores the common experiences, opportunities and challenges with respect to participation, and provides a unique look at children and youth, older people and people with disabilities as residents sharing this neighbourhood space. A limitation of the research is its failure to give adequate voice to people with disabilities within the research process. While five people with disabilities were included, and a range of efforts were made to involve other individuals from this group, we are restricted in what we can say about people with disabilities and their community participation in Garryowen. Nevertheless, the importance of this research is that it also has been led by the voices of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, highlighting five key themes relevant to how they participate: neighbourhood belonging; services; feeling left behind; and neighbourhood cohesion and safety.

#### Box 2: Emerging findings from the 3-Cities Project Neighbourhoods

Across the six neighbourhoods in the 3-Cities Project, there is a clear set of emerging findings with respect to the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Dublin, Galway and Limerick. The research in Garryowen, as with the other neighbourhoods, feeds into some of these findings more than others. We can say, broadly, that agency, belonging, dynamic community contexts, urban design, trust and reciprocity, service led-enablement, and community efforts all matter for the participation of these groups. We can also say that each of the groups is considered in a specific and very narrow way within the contexts of these neighbourhoods: children and youth in terms of youth engagement and youth-related social problems; older people in terms of social isolation and health service use; and people with disabilities in terms of access. The integrated approach taken in this work moves beyond these narrow group considerations to identify five emerging cross-group messages:

1. A holistic idea of participation and a fuller assessment of how people live their lives needs to be embraced for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
2. Neighbourhoods can enable holistic participation in a range of areas of life for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
3. Life-course experiences and transitions are embedded in, and influenced by, the neighbourhoods in which people live;
4. Neighbourhoods can determine the degree to which experiences/transitions impact on the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;
5. Changes in neighbourhoods, such as demographic, social and economic shifts, and changes in the lives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities combine to shape group and cross-group needs.

Future reports and publications will address these cross-cutting findings in more detail.

Reports on each neighbourhood will be available from: [www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/](http://www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/)



### Neighbourhood belonging:

Feelings of belonging to the neighbourhood influenced how children and youth, older people and people with disabilities thought about participation in Garryowen. Participants in general spoke about the strength of this belonging. Sources of pride in the neighbourhood, both past and present, reinforced feelings of belonging for some residents. For others, key local events, services and clubs were considered an important means of building belonging and encouraging community participation.

### Services:

The lack of appropriate services and the relevance of the existing neighbourhood-based infrastructure acted as barriers to participation for residents belonging to each of the participant groups. The absence of supported engagement for some participants translated into significant participatory limitations in different areas of life. It also meant that some participants, particularly children and youth and people with disabilities, were reliant on external services and had to leave Garryowen to avail of participation opportunities.

### Feeling left behind:

Representing different structural forms of disadvantage, participants highlighted a sense of being left behind as a neighbourhood and as a community of people. Demonstrating how participation could be influenced by macro-level factors, low-level prioritisation, a strong sense of relative deprivation, and local and national stigma, were perceived to combine to generate political, socio-economic and cultural marginalisation. For participants, this translated into tangible impacts on opportunities for participation.

### Neighbourhood cohesion and safety:

While the strength of Garryowen as a neighbourly community was emphasised as an asset, concerns over declining cohesion and a sense of personal safety impacted

on how people participated. With new residents moving into the community, people felt less familiar and secure with some of their neighbours. Concerns and experiences of anti-social behaviour and crime influenced how, when and where people participated in Garryowen, but did not undermine their attachment to the neighbourhood.

There is a sense that while some residents may be at risk of different forms of exclusion within the community – from a range of factors including immobility, low income, population change, and anti-social behaviour – the community itself risks becoming more isolated as Limerick city moves forward. Notwithstanding local community efforts, the potential of Garryowen has yet to be realised. There are currently fewer resources than may be necessary to bring about a more area-based solution to fostering participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. The reopening of the Markets Field was considered by local community champions and residents alike to represent one possible way to harness some of this potential. There was certainly a sense on the ground in Garryowen that a dedicated resource, such as a community centre, may help to address the perceived lack of opportunities and spaces to come together as a community.

What emerged from the research findings is a picture of a neighbourhood whose residents have focused on their community as an enduring asset. Garryowen is in itself a resource for local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. The sense of belonging, and identity that it inspires, its existing (albeit limited) services that facilitate participation, the by-and-large cohesive nature of the place, and the sense of resilience that is garnered from the community and its residents, all suggest that Garryowen has the potential to be a powerful means of enhancing participation, for these groups. An ever-present element in this research was the pride children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities living in Garryowen felt for a neighbourhood that was characterised by more than just its struggles with services infrastructure, demographic change, anti-social behaviour or reputation.

In looking across the findings in this short report, we can identify the main concluding points concerning participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. While a number of emerging and preliminary patterns cut across the six neighbourhood sites of the 3-Cities Project (see Box 2), the work in Garryowen points to **six key messages** with respect to participation for the three groups. These are:

- 1. Potential role of the neighbourhood to enable participation** – reaching beyond group-specific needs, the research illustrates the emphasis that children and youth, older people and people with disabilities place on neighbourhood as a facilitator of participation and, potentially, as a fundamental unit of societal integration;
- 2. Strength of people’s relationship with Garryowen across the life course** – the research demonstrates how participants’ connections and attachments to Garryowen were substantial and reflected the established nature and length of tenure of much of the population;
- 3. Significant individual and neighbourhood resilience** – the research highlights the resilience of both individual participants, coping with personal life-course changes and neighbourhood change, and of Garryowen as a neighbourhood in which responses to key challenges are sought out and enacted;
- 4. Local service infrastructure influences participation for three participant groups** – the research illustrates that some existing services can enhance opportunities for participation for some participants, while an absence of other forms of service infrastructure can serve to displace participants from their neighbourhoods;
- 5. Multifaceted forms of marginalisation impacts on Garryowen participants** – the research highlights how the neighbourhood is subject to marginalisation as a result of local factors, such as issues around deprivation, cohesion and safety, and external factors, such as perceived low-level prioritisation, relative deprivation, and stigmatisation;
- 6. Community in Garryowen continues to matter for participants** – the research shows that despite the challenges facing children and youth, older people and people with disabilities living in the neighbourhood, Garryowen is a significant relational, social, cultural and civic asset, with latent potential to become a substantial resource.

### Future Directions: Voice-led Social and Neighbourhood Innovation

Based upon the key messages, we identify three principles that can assist in enhancing participation for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Garryowen. A description of each principle, and some illustrative examples, are presented below:

#### Intergenerational Contact Zones

Garryowen has a rich history, one that emphasises a strong sense of belonging and pride that people have felt for decades. As this research illustrated, this pride is a source of a sense of community for older people, and a potential resource for other participant groups. Intergenerational spaces and opportunities, or contact zones, that explore this community history and memory have the capacity to strengthen communal ties and promote informal contact among children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Examples of intergenerational contact zones might include:

- Harnessing existing local spaces, such as school facilities or outdoor civic spaces (e.g. green areas), to facilitate regular contact and intergenerational project exhibits;
- Developing meaningful intergenerational programmes that explore past and current examples of local pride, using oral (storytelling) and visual (photographs) media.

#### Neighbourhood Reanimation

The population of Garryowen is changing in a number of ways, with newer residents and longer-term residents having fewer opportunities to connect and interact with each other. Building on existing communal activities, there is an opportunity to create new neighbourhood events and participation channels that can draw the neighbourhood together with the aim of bolstering the social fabric of Garryowen and building local forms of solidarity. A multi-strand approach to build these relationships and participation channels is necessary. Examples might include:

- Establishing neighbourhood collaborative forums to bring new and longer-term residents together to discuss and explore the development of communal events;
- Identifying naturally occurring ‘collision’ and meeting points within the neighbourhood, developing these points as more involved interaction spaces for informal social mixing.



## Development Plan Communication

There is significant value in more closely connecting existing development strategies with the contexts of diverse local neighbourhoods and the life-course perspectives of their residents. Building on existing consultation efforts within the city (e.g. Intercultural Cities and Age-Friendly Programmes, and the Limerick City and County Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019) enhanced consideration of specific neighbourhood contexts, such as Garryowen, and the inter-linking life-course needs of different groups would help promote buy-in from stakeholders and potentially deliver more effective services and development strategies. Regular communication between city-level decision-makers and Garryowen neighbourhood stakeholders would help to develop active debate on, and

an understanding of, strategic decisions that are impacting the local neighbourhood and local opportunities for service creation. This may focus on particular aspects of the local neighbourhood, such as housing, transportation, social inclusion activities, etc. Neighbourhood voices can be useful policy development instruments when stronger relationships are fostered between city structures and local contexts. Examples might include:

- Re-establishing and supporting local efforts to promote community voices at a local and city level, such as local residents' associations;
- Fostering local interest in a structured approach to represent Garryowen at city level, e.g. community networking events to address local issues with local political representatives.



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